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## **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Four men sentenced in connection with Alpha bank robbery**

The last of four men was sentenced yesterday in connection with the holdup of the Farmer and Merchants State Bank of Alpha on Sept. 10, 2007. Gary John Percival, 22, Medford, was sentenced June 2 to 40 months in prison and five years of supervised release by United States District Court Judge Joan Ericksen in Minneapolis.

The other three defendants have already been issued sentences by Judge Ericksen. Robert Allen Eskelson, 23, Northfield, was sentenced March 15 to 42 months in prison and five years supervised release. Voravong Koubandonh, 32, Jackson, was sentenced to 120 months in prison and five years of supervised release on April 3. Jeremiah Keith Billings, 19, Kilkenny, was also sentenced on April 3 to 36 months in prison and five years of supervised release.

The four men were indicted on Oct. 10, 2007, and all four pleaded guilty to one count of armed bank robbery.

According to their respective plea agreements, Billings and Percival entered the bank, located in Alpha, Minn., wearing ski masks, hooded sweatshirts and gloves, and announced the robbery. One man held a handgun, while the second man leaped over the counter and grabbed an undisclosed amount of cash. The two left the bank on foot.

Witnesses told police they thought the two men left the scene on either a dirt bike or motorcycle, while others talked of a van and a gray vehicle. During a search of the area, police found a motorcycle just off a rural road in a field. Tracks from a vehicle were also spotted in the same area, so police notified nearby agencies about the van.

A van matching the description was stopped by police in Spirit Lake, Iowa, after witnesses told officers they saw a bag thrown out of the passenger window. The bag was recovered, and it contained a ski mask, a handgun and cash. Dickinson County, Iowa, deputies stopped the van and placed Eskelson and Percival into custody.

Officers in Jackson County, Minn., arrested Billings and Koubandonh after spotting them

driving a gray vehicle that matched the police description.

This case was the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Jackson County Sheriff's Office and Dickinson County Sheriff's Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael A. Dees.